



MEDIA RELEASE

19 December 2011

Young Carers Project Survey launched on Facebook

The Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) has launched a survey targeting young mental health carers on Facebook over the weekend.

The *Young Carers Project* (YCP) survey app aims to collect information from young mental health carers about their caring role; what sort of caring activities they undertake; how caring impacts on their day-to-day lives; what supports are available to young mental health carers in their area; and the appropriateness of these supports.

This survey app forms part of the broader MHCA Mental Health Carers Project 2011-12, and builds on the work of *Adversity to Advocacy: the lives and hopes of mental health carers*, and the *Mental Health Carers Report 2010*.

Young mental health carers experience significant disadvantage as a result of their caring role. Caring responsibilities often get in the way of school, casual jobs and socialising with friends, and over the long-term this can result in lower rates of employment and education participation, poorer physical and mental health and social isolation. Despite this disadvantage, young mental health carers are often hidden or absent from key research and data collection activities that target mental health carers.

Social media platforms like Facebook provide a unique opportunity to initiate conversations with young people online, to collect their comments and views, and to respect their right to anonymity. For young mental health carers, anonymity is particularly important as the stigma associated with mental illness can often cause embarrassment, fear and shame, and deter them from publicly identifying as a 'mental health carer'.

All young mental health carers aged 13 to 18 in Australia are eligible to participate in the YCP survey app. The MHCA is also offering a \$20 pre-paid VISA gift card to survey participants in recognition of their time and contribution. The app will remain live on Facebook until the start of February 2012, or until 1,000 responses are collected.

The MHCA welcomes any support in disseminating information about this groundbreaking research and bringing to the fore the experiences of young mental health carers in Australia. Requests for further information, including promotional material, online banners and graphics should be emailed through to kate.judd@mhca.org.au.

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